

Abstract:

Title: Live Cello Accompaniment as a Therapeutic Modality in Dance: Does it aid in Physical and Mental Well-Being in College Students?

Music has an imperative role in dance, but how music and dance work together to affect the body emotionally, physically, and mentally is crucial for the understanding of the mind-body connection required for movement. Dancers inadvertently explore this idea throughout every class period or practice, but oftentimes, the accompaniment of music is prerecorded and played through technology such as speakers and phones. Live accompaniment is rare to come by for dancers, but the Alma College Dance Department is fortunate to offer it in select dance classes through percussion instruments and the piano. The cello, a large, low-pitched bowed string instrument, has a rich history in dance, contributing to melodic lines heard in professional ballets such as *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, but is not utilized as accompaniment to classes at Alma. In conjunction with this, the cello, with its rich timbre, is often used in meditative, relaxation, and sound healing music.

The purpose of this study is to explore the live accompaniment of the cello in partnership with dancers' movement to assess its impact on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of dancers. Through practice-based research, including the teaching of three dance classes, the impact that live accompaniment of the cello has on dancers' mental and physical well-being will be further understood, an area currently lacking research. After collecting pre- and post-class surveys to assess how each dancer feels mentally and physically, the data will be analyzed to determine the effects and any possible correlations of the dance classes with the live cello accompaniment. A post-class survey will also be given to the cellist to get the musicians' input. Our presentation will include context for the experiment, collected data, and outcomes in a PowerPoint format.

It is hypothesized that having a live cellist for a class will positively affect the physical and mental well-being of college students. These results will allow further understanding of areas that could improve the physical and mental well-being of collegiate dancers, a topic lacking previous research.